

CERCOSPORA LEAF SPOT OF PEPPER

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The garden or green pepper (*Capsicum frutescens* L.) is a native of tropical America (1) and is one of Florida's most important vegetable crops. Pepper production reached 6.5 million bushels on 17,000 acres during 1967-68, having a total sales value of approximately \$26 million (4). Florida is considered to be the leading pepper-producing state in the country (3).

Cercospora leaf spot, also known as frog-eye, is one of the more common diseases of pepper and occurs wherever peppers are grown (1, 5). It is more destructive in the southern states and is usually present in the field at any time of the year. It is particularly severe in the summer months during the rainy portions of the season. The disease is caused by *Cercospora capsici* Heald and Wolf (2). The fungus is disseminated via spores by wind and rains (5).

SYMPTOMS. The first symptoms of *Cercospora* leaf spot are small, circular, water-soaked spots which enlarge and develop a dark brown border with a light tan center (Fig. 1). As the necrotic tissue in the center of the spot enlarges and dries, it often becomes brittle and cracks, sometimes falling out. The spores are produced in tremendous numbers on the necrotic tissue of the leaf spot. When numerous, the leaf spots often coalesce involving the entire leaf which soon drops.

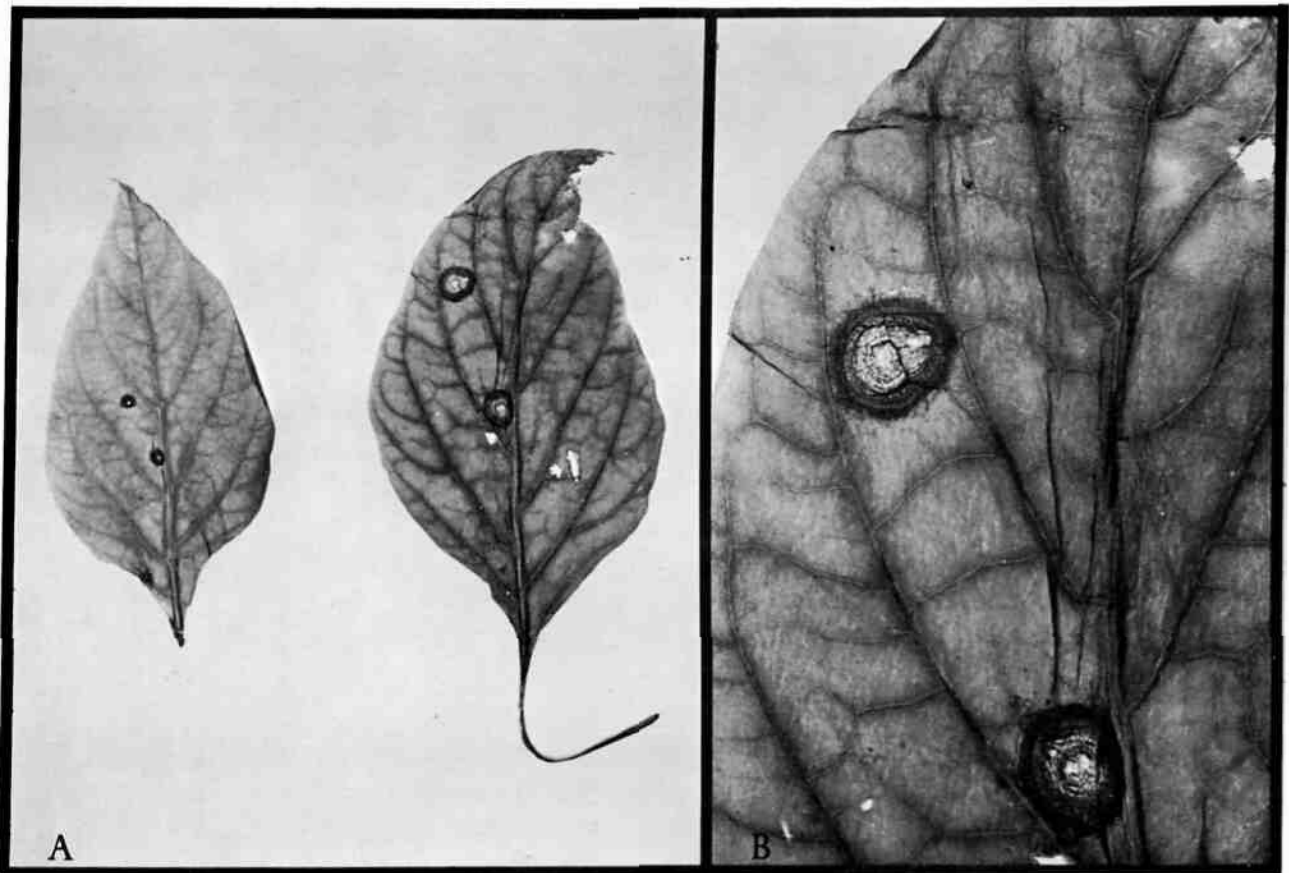


Fig. 1. *Cercospora* leaf spot of pepper: A) frog-eye-type leaf spot; B) close-up of same.

Stems, petioles and fruit stems are also susceptible to the fungus. Infection of these parts results in girdling. The most serious damage to peppers from this disease results from defoliation which weakens the plant, and stem infections which cause wilting, stunting and fruit drop. Though the fruit is not attacked directly, it may become malformed when peduncles become infected.

CONTROL. For control of *Cercospora* leaf spot, sprays with any of the following fungicides are recommended: maneb (80%) or premixed maneb plus zinc at 1% lb per 100 gal water; zineb (75%) at 2 lb per 100 gal water; or copper (48-53%) at 4 lb per 100 gal of water (3).

Literature Cited

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